JACKPOT!
MAYBE I'LL HAVE GRANDMA MIX 'EM INTO A STIR-FRY.
KAZU-NARI!
KAZUNARI! SORRY I TOOK SO LONG!

FLOMP
GOSH! YOU FOUND ALL THOSE?!
ESPECIALLY SINCE NOW I'M GUARANTEED TO WIN THE GREAT MUSHROOM HUNT!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE.
HMPH
WHICH IS ALSO LAST PLACE!
THINK OF IT THIS WAY, AT LEAST YOU'VE SECURED SECOND PLACE.
AWWW, NO FAIR!
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT FOR BEING LATE, NATSUKO.
THINK
YOU AND I ARE THE ONLY ONES HERE—
STUMBLE

KAZU-
NARI...
YONAKI VILLAGE
THURSDAY AUGUST 4, 1977, 2:02 P.M.

NATSU-KO...
SINCE WE'RE COUSINS, MOST OF THE ADULTS DON'T APPROVE OF OUR RELATION-SHIP.
Y-YOU'D BETTER BACK UP.
IF THE VIL-LAGERS SEE US...
BUT...
EVEN THOUGH WE'RE COUS-INS...
WE...
...CAN STILL GET MAR-RIED, RIGHT?

A HUNTING RIFLE...
SHUUHEI-SAN MUST BE NEARBY.
WE CAN'T LET HIM SEE US.
LET'S GO OVER THERE.
FLAPA
FLAPA
FLAPA
FLAPA
BLAM
—
Y-YEAH...I LOOKED IT UP, IT'S LEGAL.
BA-BLUM
BA-BLUM
BA-BLUM
BA-BLUM
BA-BLUM
GULP

YONAKI VILLAGE OUR HOME IS A REMOTE TOWN WAY UP IN THE MOUNTAINS.
BECAUSE IT'S SO ISOLATED, THE PEOPLE ARE STILL ATTACHED TO A LOT OF OLD TRADITIONS.
WE FARM OR HUNT ALL OUR OWN FOOD AND DON'T INTERACT MUCH WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
THE ONE ROAD THAT LEADS INTO THE VILLAGE IS ALWAYS LOCKED UP TIGHT.
OF COURSE, THERE ARE THOSE LIKE MY DAD WHO GO DOWN INTO THE CITY FOR WORK, BUT THEY'RE RARE EXCEPTIONS.
ESPECIALLY NATSUKO'S FAMILY—HER GREAT-GRANDMOTHER WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A SORCERESS BACK IN HER DAY.
I GUESS MY FAMILY'S PRETTY LAID-BACK COMPARED TO NATSUKO'S—PROBABLY BECAUSE OF THE LINEAGE.
LIKE MANY OTHERS, NATSUKO'S MOTHER YUMIKO DISAPPROVES OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.

NATSUKO'S ALWAYS BEEN A VERY SERIOUS, COMPETITIVE GIRL WHO THROWS HERSELF HEADLONG INTO EVERYTHING.
BUT THE WAY THE VILLAGERS TALK ABOUT THE TWO OF US REALLY GETS TO HER.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
STILL, THOSE ARE EXACTLY THE TRAITS I LIKE MOST ABOUT HER...
NATSUKO.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT
ONE OF THESE DAYS EVERYONE IS GONNA HAVE TO ACCEPT US FOR WHO WE ARE!

YES.
IS THAT WHAT THEY'RE CALLED?
MARI-GOLDS
OKAY, KAZU-NARI...
SHE WOULD KNOW ALL THAT...
IN FOR-EIGN COUN-TRIES THEY'RE USED IN SALADS.
...AND IN MEDI-CINES
...BUT AROUND HERE THEY START IN EARLY SUMMER.
NOR-MALLY YOU'D PLANT THEM IN THE FALL AND THEY'D BLOOM IN THE WINTER...
THEY CALLED IT "SORCERY." BUT SINCE HER FAMILY MOSTLY TENDED TO THE SICK USING VARIOUS TRADI TIONAL REM EDIES. THEY WERE MORE LIKE PHARMACISTS

NAT-SUKO LOOKED SO SAD AS SHE SAID THAT.
I TOOK HER SOFT, PORCE-LAIN HAND IN MINE AND HELD IT TIGHT.
OH CRAP, IT'S LATE!
ANNU-ALS...
THAT BLOOM AND WITHER WITHIN A YEAR.
THEY REPRE-SENT TRAN-QUILITY, DISAP-POINT-MENT, AND THE SORROW OF PART-ING.

YOU TWO!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING OUT SO LATE?!
JUST GATHERING MUSHROOMS, AUNT YUMIKO.
LOOK AT HOW MANY—
MUSHROOMS, YOU SAY? ALONE?!
WELL, WE CALLED YUUJI AND RYUUJI...
...BUT THEY HAD TO WORK OUT IN THE FIELDS.
THEN, KAZUNARI-SAN...
SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE CALLED IT OFF?
NATSUKO IS A YOUNG WOMAN AT A DELICATE AGE. DON'T YOU THINK IT'S IMPROPER FOR YOU TO BE TAKING HER UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS?
I, UHH...

SOMETHING AS SHAMEFUL AS A HONDA MARYING HER COUSIN WOULD DESTROY THAT TRUST.
THE VILLAGERS HAVE GREAT FAITH IN US!
OUR ANCESTORS EARNED THEIR KEEP BY CURING ILLNESS AND DISEASE WITH MAGIC.
NATSUKO, I'VE TALKED TO YOU ABOUT THIS BEFORE!
ESPECIALLY THE HONDA FAMILY!
WE MUST RESPECT TRADITION
I WON'T TOLERATE OTHER PEOPLE DOUBTING OUR INTEGRITY!
WHY DO YOU CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THE FAMILY'S OLD TRADE?!
DAD WAS JUST ANOTHER FIELD WORKER WHEN HE WAS ALIVE!
MOTHER, YOU NEVER LEARNED A THING ABOUT THAT SO-CALLED MAGIC!
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT YEAR IT IS?!

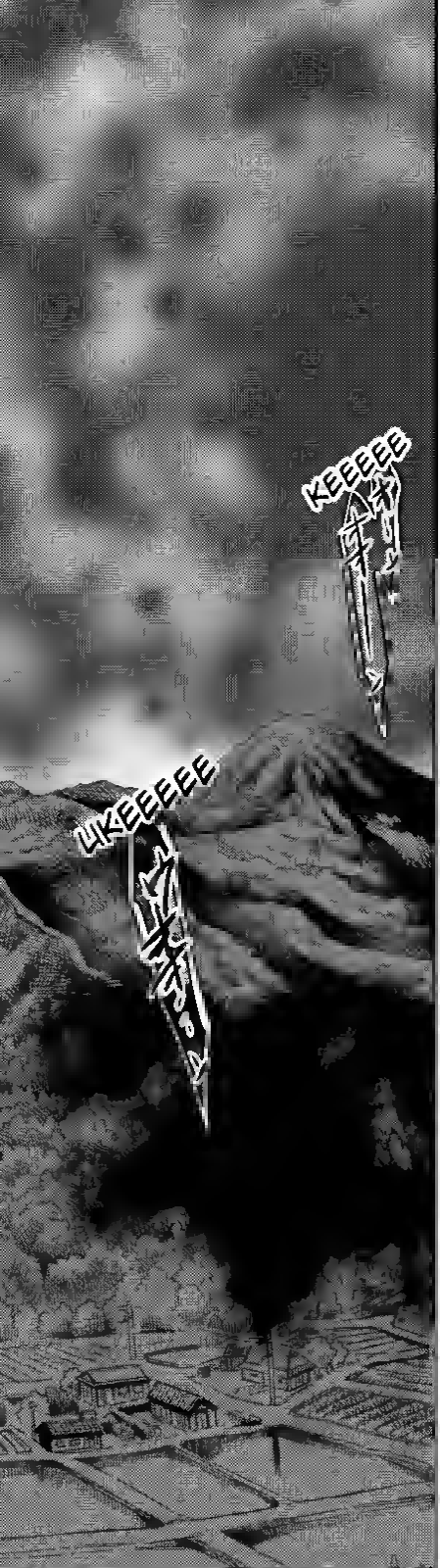
*SIGN: STOREHOUSE

MNH...
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
H-HEY, NATSU
I'M SO SICK OF THIS STUPIDITY, MOTHER!
THE WHOLE "SORCERY" THING WAS JUST A RUSE TO HIDE THE TRUTH!
IT WAS ALL ABOUT DRUG—
SLAP
ENOUGH, NATSUKO!

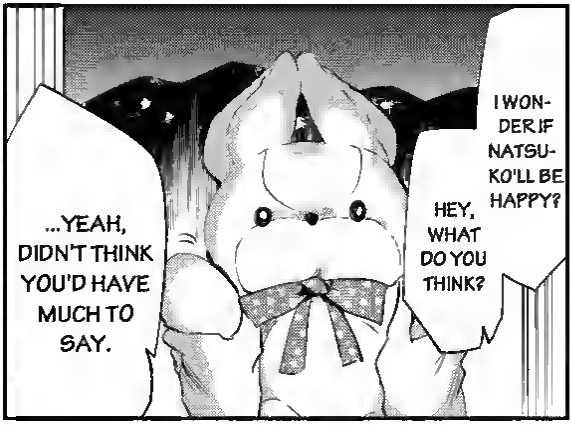
*SIGN: STOREHOUSE

THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND MY DAUGHTER. CHILDREN NEED TO STAY OUT OF IT.
PLEASE!
BUT
YOUR BEING HERE IS ONLY MAKING NATSUKO MORE WORKED UP.
PLEASE GO HOME, KAZUNARI-SAN.
.....
NATSUKO!
OPEN THIS DOOR!
NATSUKO!

IT SUCKS THAT WE'RE COUSINS...
NATSUKO'LL BE FINE. IT'S SUMMER SO SHE WON'T CATCH A COLD IN THERE...
AND AFTER ALL THAT, AUNT YUMIKO WON'T GO ANYWHERE UNTIL SHE COMES OUT OF THAT SHED.
CHILDREN NEED TO STAY OUT OF IT.
IT'S TRUE, WE'RE STILL KIDS...
SIT
BUT WHEN WE GROW UP, WE'LL LEAVE THIS BACKWATER VILLAGE.
SLIDE
RUSTLE


KEEEEE
KEEEEEE

WHEN CAN THE TWO OF US FINALLY...
I SPENT ALL MY MONEY BUYING THIS STUFFED RABBIT FOR HER BIRTHDAY.


...YEAH, DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE MUCH TO SAY.
HEY, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I WONDER IF NATSUKO'LL BE HAPPY?

KEEE

KEEEEN

WHAT WAS THAT? NOT THE USUAL ANIMAL HOWLING...
MAN...IT FEELS LIKE SOMETHING BAD'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN...
VILLAGE TRADITIONS...
SOMETHING..
NATSUKO...
SNAAAAARL

KAAA-ZUUU-NAAA-RIII-KUUUN!
HEY, KAZU-NARI! YOU HOME?
ORDER 1 - MONDAY AUGUST 8, 10:21 A.M.
JEEZ, YUUJI, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHOUT.
PEEK
I'M NOT HELPING YOU OUT IN THE FIELDS, I'VE GOTTA STUDY.
CRAWL
CRAWL
ARE YOU BON-KERS? IT'S SUM-MER VACA-TION!
WHAT?!
STUDY?!

INOUE-SENSEI SAID WE'D HAVE A TEST AS SOON AS THE SEMESTER STARTED.
AAH, WE CAN JUST STUDY THE NIGHT BEFORE.
YOU'RE GONNA WAIT TILL THE LAST MINUTE?!
WE'RE ONLY FIRST-YEARS, MAN! WE CAN GET AWAY WITH THAT.
AND BE-SIDES, IS THERE REALLY ANY POINT TO STUDY-ING?
YANK
THE POINT IS—
WHOA
FORGET THAT.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING COOL TO SHOW YOU.
NYEE HEE
SOME-THING COOL, HUH?
OH, NATSU-KO, TOO.
YUP! RYUUJI AND MICHIKO ARE WAIT-ING AT THE MEETING HALL. YOU GOTTA COME TOO.

WELL THEN SHE'S ALL BETTER, I SAW HER OUT THIS MORNING...
I TRIED TO VISIT HER A BUNCH OF TIMES, BUT AUNT YUMIKO JUST SAID "IT'S NOTHING MAJOR," AND SENT ME HOME.
AFTER OUR MUSHROOM ADVENTURE, I HEARD NATSUKO GOT REALLY SICK AND COULDN'T EVEN SET FOOT OUTSIDE.
HUH? NATSUKO'S BEEN BEDRIDDEN WITH A FEVER FOR DAYS.
I STILL HAVEN'T GIVEN HER HER PRESENT...
WHEW
OH... THAT'S A RELIEF.
SMIRK
WHATEVER, C'MON. I'LL TELL YOU THE STORY ONCE EVERYONE'S TOGETHER.
YANK
YANK
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!
JEEZ, LEMME PUT ON MY SHOES!
SMIRK
SO YOU'RE IN, RIGHT? SINCE NATSUKO'S COMING?
TH-THAT'S NOT THE REASON—!

MORNING, KAZUNARI.
YUUJI DRAG YOU ALONG, TOO?
SO ONLY YUUJI KNOWS?
YEAH, HE WANTS TO TELL EVERYONE AT ONCE.
SAME FOR RYUUJI
DUNNO, HE JUST TOLD ME TO WAIT AT THE MEETING HALL.
YEAH. SO WHAT'S THIS BIG COOL THING, MICHIKO?

NATSU-KO, ARE YOU OKAY NOW?
YEAH. I HAD A BIT OF A FEVER FOR A WHILE...
...BUT I'M FINE.
BLEH
THERE THEY ARE.
I BROUGHT THEM BOTH! 連れて来たよ
OH, I KNOW YOU CAME TO VISIT. I'M SO SORRY ABOUT MY MOM.
HON-ESTLY, SHE'S SUCH A PAIN—
DON'T SWEAT IT, I KNOW HOW AUNT YUMIKO IS.
OKAY YUUJI, WE'RE ALL HERE. WHAT'S YOUR BIG SECRET?
OH, YOU'RE RIGHT!

IT'S AN IMPORTANT MISSION WHERE ALL OUR LIVES ARE ON THE LINE!
HUH?
OUR LIVES? WHAT'RE YOU...
THIS CAME IN THE MAIL TODAY.
THIS IS...
AND THAT IS...?
FORGET THE ENVELOPE, READ THE LETTER.
O-OKAY...
WHAT...WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?

THIS IS THE KING'S GAME. ALL VILLAGERS ARE PARTICIPATING.
THE KING'S ORDERS ARE ABSOLUTE. PLEASE CARRY THEM OUT BY THE END OF THE DAY.
PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO QUIT.
ORDER 1: ALL VILLAGERS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 10 AND 20 MUST TOUCH A HUMAN CORPSE.
THOSE WHO FAIL TO OBEY THE KING'S ORDER WILL BE PUNISHED BY HANGING.
INSET: FAIL TO/ HANGING
"KING'S GAME?"

THE LETTERS ARE ALL SHAKY AND HARD TO READ.
NO IDEA!
FORGET THAT, I'M NOT TOUCHING ANY CORPSES!
WHO IS THIS KING PERSON, ANYWAY?
WHAT'S A KING'S GAME?
MURMUR
MURMUR
YEAH, IT WAS HIS "COOL THING" AFTER ALL.
YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO SCARE US, AREN'T YOU?
MURMUR
MEANING IT'S PROBABLY YUUJI HIMSELF.
PROBABLY SO WE CAN'T TELL WHO WROTE IT...
MURMUR
MURMUR
IF WE DON'T TOUCH A DEAD BODY TODAY WE'LL ALL BE HANGED!
NO, NO! I'M TRYING TO SAVE EVERYONE!
MURMUR

NAH, WE CAN JUST GO TO THE VILLAGE CEMETERY.
ARE WE JUST GONNA GO TO THE MORGUE AND SAY, "HEY, CAN WE RUB ONE OF THE CORP-SES?"
WHO THE HELL MESSES WITH DEAD BODIES?
OH YEAH? WHAT?
WE GOTTA DO SOME-THING.
THERE'RE PLENTY OF OLD GRAVES WAY IN THE BACK.

*LETTER: THE KING'S GAME

YOU DON'T WANNA END UP HANGING FROM THE CEILING LIKE THE LETTER SAYS, RIGHT?
WELL, NO...
YEAH, ONE FROM DECADES AGO WHERE THE GUY HAS NO LIVING RELATIVES.
YOU'RE GONNA DIG UP A GRAVE?!

Y-YUUJI!
YOU JUST WANNA DO IT TO SHOW OFF HOW BRAVE YOU ARE!
NOD NOD
JUST IN CASE!
BETTER TOUCH A CORPSE TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, YEAH?
WA HA HA, A TEST OF GUTS AT THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER!
EVERY-ONE OVER TEN HAS TO MEET HERE TO-NIGHT AT EIGHT!
夜鳴村集会

*SIGN: YONAKI TOWN HALL

OKAY, WE FORGET ABOUT DAIKI!
YOU'RE KIDDING ME! SO YOU'D RATHER HE HANG TO DEATH, THEN?
LOOM
I'M SCARED OF THE KING, BUT I'M MORE SCARED OF WHAT HIS MOM WOULD DO TO ME IF SHE FOUND OUT I TOOK HIM TO A GRAVEYARD AT NIGHT...
ARE YOU REALLY GONNA DO IT?
SHIVER
SHIVER
EH. I DON'T REALLY WANT TO...
...BUT I GUESS I'LL TAG ALONG.
I'M SURE YUUJI WROTE IT HIM-SELF TO SCARE US.
RYUUJI AND MICHIKO MIGHT BE IN ON IT, TOO.

IT'S TIME FOR THE MAIN EVENT.
FLINCH
BA-DUM
MONDAY AUGUST 8, 8:15 P.M.
YOU OKAY, NATSU-KO?
IF YOU THINK A FEW ANI-MALS HOWLING IS SCARY, JUST WAIT...
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, AIN'T IT? TO OBEY THE KING'S ORDER!
YOU'RE REALLY DIG-GING IT UP.
THE KING BEING YOU.
I'M TELL-ING YOU, IT'S NOT ME.
THEN WHO? IT ASKED FOR ALL KIDS OVER 10. SO IT HAD TO BE ONE OF US, RIGHT?

AND IT WASN'T ME I WAS ASLEEP WHEN YUUJI CAME OVER!
THAT'S NO PROOF, YOU COULD'VE BEEN FAKING!
SHOVEL
SHOVEL
MICHIKO AND KAZUYA HAUL THE DIRT. EVERYONE ELSE WILL SWITCH IN AS WE GET TIRED.
OUR HANDS WERE FORCED BY THE KING'S ORDER.
南無阿弥陀仏
AMEN
南無阿弥陀仏
AMEN
PLEASE FORGIVE US FOR DIS-TURBING YOUR ETER-NAL REST.
THERE
RYUUJI, DIG.
YUCK, I'M GETTING DIRTY!
PAYDIRT!
CRACK
I TOLD YOU TO WEAR WORK CLOTHES!
Y-YOU'RE ACTUALLY...
CREEEE

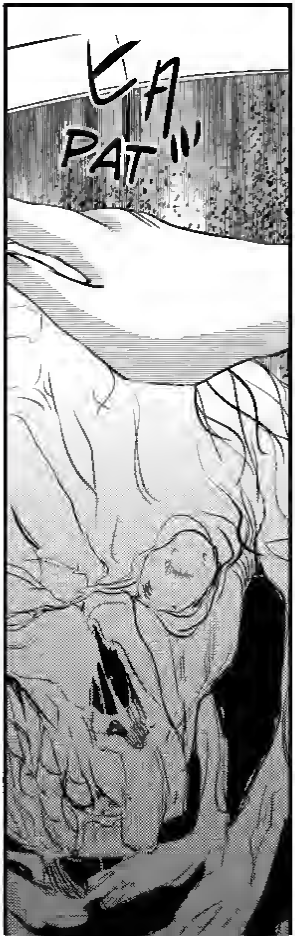
BLAAAA
AAAH!
EEEEE-EEEEE-EEK!
HGGK!
O-OKAY... HERE GOES NOTH-ING...
ゴク
GULP

PAT PAT
IT'S JUST A BODY.
NOT LIKE WE HAD TO BITE IT OR ANYTHING.
YOU DIDN'T EVEN MAKE CONTACT FOR ONE SECOND
FOR SUCH A BIG GUY, YOU'RE KINDA CHICKEN, YUUJI
YAAY!
AAAAND DONE.
POKE
I DID IT!
I TOUCHED IT!
TAP TAP
EWW, IT'S ALL SQUISHY... HOW DOES A DECADES-OLD CORPSE STILL HAVE SKIN?!
BLURP
IT'S CALLED GRAVE WAX. OVER THE YEARS A CORPSE'S BODY FAT CAN TRANSFORM TO BE ALMOST LIKE TALLOW.
YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU LOOK.
NEXT?

R-RIGHT...
GULP
YOU'RE UP, KAZU-NARI.
YOU AND NATSUKO ARE THE LAST TWO HIGH SCHOOLERS TO GO, SO AS THE MAN, YOU'RE FIRST.
SHOVE
ACK!
EE-EE-EE-EE-EW!
SPLAT
SLIDE

I HELPED! YOU'RE WEL-COME!
HA HA
HA HA
GAH
I DIDN'T NEED YOUR HELP!

MICHIKO, THINK THINGS THROUGH!
HE COULD'VE FALLEN ON A COFFIN NAIL OR SOME-THING SHARP!
HEY, YOU'RE HERE. YOU COULD'VE GIVEN HIM ALL THE TLC HE NEEDS.
THAT'D MAKE HIM HAPPY, TOO!


PAT

ANYWAY, YOUR TURN. GET TO IT.
GRIN
FINE!

I...
I'M NOT DOING IT!
MY MOM'S PROBABLY WORRIED I'M GOING HOME!
NOW IT'S DOWN TO SUZUYO AND KAZUYA.
TWITCH
SATISFIED NOW?
WOW, YOU'RE BRAVER THAN KAZUNARI.
ARE YOU GONNA RUN HOME CRYING TO YOUR MOM, TOO?
AND WHAT OF OUR GRADE SCHOOLER, KAZUYA-KUN?
WELL, ONE DOWN. PROBABLY TOO MUCH OF A SHOCK FOR A LITTLE MIDDLE SCHOOLER.
DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME!
OH WAIT, DON'T YOU STILL CALL HER "MOMMY"?

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE KISS FROM MISS MICHIKO AS A REWARD?
GIGGLE
N-NO WAY, I DON'T WANT ONE OF YOUR NASTY KISSES!
PAT
I'M A MAN, TOO. I CAN DO THIS!
I STAND CORRECTED.

HEY, MICHIKO, I'LL TAKE ONE OF THOSE KISSES RIGHT HERE.
STILL A LITTLE BOY AFTER ALL, COMPLETELY BLIND TO MY CHARMS.
YOU'RE IN HIGH SCHOOL, RYUUJI, YOU DON'T GET ANY REWARDS.
WELL, LOOKS LIKE THE KING'S GAME IS OVER

EXCEPT FOR SUZUYO WE ALL PASSED.
PRETTY MEMORABLE HUH? THE NIGHT WE ALL PROVED OUR COURAGE
I WOULDN'T CALL IT NICE. I FEEL LIKE HE'S GONNA PUT A CURSE ON ME.
LET'S HURRY AND PUT EVERYTHING BACK THE WAY IT WAS.
I KNOW, I KNOW. LOOK, I EVEN BROUGHT INCENSE.

TUESDAY AUGUST 9, 8:48 A.M.
SPLASH
MOM'S STAY GOT EXTENDED AGAIN I GUESS
I HOPE SHE CAN COME HOME SOON...
SCRUB SCRUB
OH, MORNING, YUUJI.
I CAN'T HANG OUT TODAY.
WITH MY MOM IN THE HOSPITAL, IT'S JUST ME AND GRANDMA DOING THE CLEANING AND THE LAUNDRY—
YUUJI. WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK...
...PALE...

SUZUYO AND DAIKI ARE DEAD.
CREEAK
ギッ…